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Paccanīka Sutta

The Discourse on the Gainsayer | **S 7.16** [Ee S 7.2.6]
Theme: Being open to others
Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

1 Introduction

1.1 COMMENTARY

Like **the Mahā,sāla Sutta** (S 7.14), and **the Māna-t,thaddha** (S 7.15) which precede it, **the Paccanīka Sutta** (S 7.16) has a social theme—it (S 7.16) deals with a brahmin who is fixated on contradicting others. The Commentary says that he finds pleasure in doing so. When someone says, "It's all white," he will say, "It's all black," and so on (SA 1:264).

1.2 RELATED SUTTA

1.2.1 The Buddha points out a contradictory statement in **the Bhaya Bherava Sutta** (M 4), thus:

> **21**   There are, brahmin, some recluses and brahmins who perceive night to be day, and day
> to be night.
>   Of these recluses and brahmins, I say that they live in delusion.
>   But I, brahmin, perceive <u>night as night</u>, and <u>day as day</u>.[1]
>   21.2 Now, brahmin, whoever, speaking rightly, were to say,
>   'A being of undeluded nature has arisen in the world
>   for the good of the many, for the joy of the many, out of compassion for the world,
>   for the good and joy of gods and humans,'[2]
>   then, speaking rightly, would indeed speak of me, thus:
>   *a being of undeluded nature has arisen in the world for the good of the many, for the joy of*
> *the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and joy of gods and humans*.
>
> <div align="right">(M 4,21), SD 44.3</div>

1.2.2 Clearly, the Buddha is here disapproving of casuistry, theological sophistry and philosophical specu-lations, because they hinder proper meditation for the sake of awakening. The Commentary takes this literally, and describes how a dhyana-attainer with a white kasiṇa and emerges from this dhyana during the night. Due to the nature of the kasiṇa, he mistakes night for day. Or, some birds, active only during the day, chirp at night and cause someone who hears them from inside a dwelling to mistake night for

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[1] The Chin version presents this differently. The Buddha here points out that some recluses and brahmins, day or night, do not understand the truth of the path (*dharma,marga*). In contrast, the Buddha does understand the path, day or night. (EĀ 31.1/T2.666b11: 日夜之中解於道法 *rìyuè zhīzhōng jiě yú dàofǎ.* The expression 道法 *dàofǎ* regularly stands for the Buddha's teaching, something other recluses and brahmins might indeed not have fully understood, be it day or night. Hirakawa 1997: 1160 lists *dharma* and *marga,dharma* as equivalents to 道法 *dàofǎ*, which Soothill, *Dict of Chinese Buddhist Terms,* 1937:416 tr as "the way or methods to obtain Nirvaṇa." **The Skt frag** however supports the Pali reading: SHT IV 32 folio 37V2: (*saṁ*)*jñ*[*o*] *divaṁse ca* [*d*](*i*)*vasa* [*sa*], for Pali *divā yeva samānaṁ divā ti sañjānāmi* (M 1:21,24): see also T 374/12.521a29 or T 375/12.765b29, where the same image recurs: 若以晝為夜是即顛倒 *ruò yǐ zhòu wéi yè shì jí diāndǎo*.

[2] The whole quote: *Asammoha,dhammo satto loke uppanno bahu.jana,hitāya bahu.jana,sukhāya lokânukampā-ya atthāya hitāya sukhāya deva,manussānan'ti.* As in **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,63), SD 49.1.

day. Conversely, a dhyana-attainer with a dark kasiṇa emerges in the day, and also one who hears the chirping of a night-bird during daytime, mistakes day for night (MA 1:121).[3]

1.2.3 In the Bhaya Bherava Sutta, the contradictory views disapproved by the Buddha are philosophical ones based of casuisty, sophistry and speculation. The Commentary explains that such unhelpful views may have arisen from misunderstanding one's meditation or doing the wrong kind of meditation. While Paccanīka,sāta brahmin's contradictory habit is a psychological inclination, the contradictory views of the Bhaya Bherava Sutta are philosophical or religious or both in nature.

Either way, both kinds of contradictory views are not helpful for spiritual progress, and should be abandoned. The Buddha, in the Paccanīka,sāta Sutta, explains in two verses, why the brahmin should abandon his contradicting tendencies. This Sutta also shows that with Dharma-based proper instructions, such wrong views can and should be corrected.

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The Discourse on the Gainsayer
S 7.16

1 Originating in Sāvatthī.

2 Now, at that time, there lived in Sāvatthī a brahmin called Paccanīka,sāta (who delights in gainsaying).[4]

3 Then, it occurred to the brahmin Paccanīka,sāta:
"Now, let me approach the recluse Gotama, and whatever he says, I will contradict him!"[5]

4 Now, at that time, the Blessed One was walking back and forth in the open.[6]

5 Then, the brahmin Paccanīka,sāta approached the Blessed One, and said to him:
"Speak Dharma, recluse!"[7]

6 *Na paccanīka,sātena*		A word well spoken is not easy to be understood	*b*
suvijānaṁ subhāsitaṁ		by one who takes pleasure in merely contradicting,	*a*
upakkiliṭṭha,cittena		by one with a corrupt mind,	
sārambha,bahulena ca.	693	or by one so full of drive to outdo others.[8]	

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[3] Jayatilleke, in his *Ethics in Buddhist Perspective,* however, sees the passage in a symbolic sense, implying the Buddha "frankly accepts the existence of both good and evil in the world of conditioned existence" (1973:30).

[4] *Paccanīka,sāto = paccanīka,* "one who contradicts, opposes, gainsays; an adversary" + *sāta*, "one who finds pleasure or delight (in)." On *sāta,* see M 75,18/1:508; A 3.63/1:181 f; S 2:220; Dh 341c; Sn 867a, 869a.

[5] *Yaṁ nūnâhaṁ yena samaṇo gotamo ten'upasaṅkameyyaṁ, yaṁ yad eva samaṇo gotamo bhāsissati, taṁ tad ev'assâhaṁ* [Be:Ka *tad eva sâhaṁ*] *paccanīkāssan'ti* [Ee *paccanīkassan'ti*; Be:Ka *paccanīkasātan'ti*].

[6] This mindful walking either refers to walking meditation or to a mild physical exercise, or both—which are recommended by the Buddha for monastics and which is often done by them. See **Caṅkama S** (A 5.29), SD 76.3; **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,3), SD 6.14; **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125,2.2) n, SD 46.3.

[7] *Bhaṇa samaṇa,dhamman'ti,* which is not a polite invitation.

[8] "Drive to outdo (others)," *sārambha*, "impetuosity" (Sn 328c); the drive to outdo others (MA 1:170); "the habit of drawing out conflicting action" (*paccanīka,sātatā,saṅkhāto,* SnA 334); in other words, "competitiveness, one-upmanship."

7   *Yo ca vineyya sārambhaṁ*   But when the drive to outdo others is removed,
       appasādañ ca cetaso.   and also the heart's lack of faith,
       āghātaṁ paṭinissajja   having pushed away malice,
       sa ve⁹ jaññā subhāsitan'ti.   694   one can indeed understand a well-spoken word.

8   When this was spoken, the brahmin Paccanīka,sāto said to the Blessed One:
"Wonderful, bhante! Wonderful, bhante! Just as if one
     were to place upright what had been overturned, or
        were to reveal what was hidden, or
          were to show the way to one who was lost, or
            were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
in the same way master Gotama has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.
    I go to master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dharma, and to the community of monks, too.
    May master Gotama remember me as a layman who has gone for refuge from this day forth for life."

— evaṁ —

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⁹ Be *sa ve*; Be:Ka Ke Se *sace*.